



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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## **MISSOURI LAWMAKERS ONCE AGAIN ADDRESS WORKERS' COMP REFORM LEGISLATION**

Lawmakers are once again considering legislation that would create a more fair and equitable workers' compensation system. Workers' comp laws have been identified as one of the leading reasons for job loss in Missouri in the last two years.

Bills have been introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives that would make important changes to our current laws.

The legislation would modify the definition of an accident to include only events that are "an unexpected traumatic event or unusual strain identifiable by time and place of occurrence producing at the time objective systems of an injury caused by a specific event during a single work shift."

The bill modifies the definition of injury by limiting it only allow to compensation if the accident was the dominant factor in causing the condition.

I have backed workers' comp reform since my election to the Senate, while Rep. Kevin Wilson, R-Neosho, and Rep. Steve Hunter, R-Joplin, have sponsored legislation in the House of Representatives.

Our current laws have adversely affected both small and large businesses in Southwest Missouri. However, in our four-state corner businesses can relocate just a few miles, in any direction, and reside in a state with friendlier workers' comp laws.

For the last three years, Herb Schmidt, president of Contract Freighters, Inc., in Joplin has offered testimony to Senate and House committees on this issue. Between 1999 and 2001, CFI's total workers' comp costs increased by 68 percent, making it the fastest growing expense for this company.

CFI randomly selected 12 actual workers' comp claims at CFI and compared costs in Missouri with what they would have been in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Costs for these 12 claims would have been more than 40 percent lower in Oklahoma and over 36 percent lower in Arkansas, largely as a result of reform legislation that was adopted by the respective General Assemblies in each state in recent years.

CFI's costs would have been lower in these states because of the fact that both have adopted clearer standards for what constitutes a compensable claim.

CFI is a thriving company, which is important to the economy of Southwest Missouri and the State of Missouri.

With our neighboring states adopting workers' comp reform legislation, it becomes even more urgent for the Missouri General Assembly to act on reform measures in order to remain competitive.

In other business, the Missouri Senate gave first round approval to landmark legislation that will make it easier for law enforcement to solve crimes. Senate Bill 1000 will require DNA testing of all individuals convicted of a felony or sexual offense.

Under SB 1000, any individual who is convicted of a felony or any sexual offense must provide a sample of DNA for profiling analysis.

The DNA sample will be taken with a swab from the convicted felon's mouth. DNA, the chemical that embodies a person's genetic programming, can be found almost everywhere. People shed a constant torrent of dead skin cells. Criminals leave blood when breaking and entering; they shed hair and skin cells in fights, deposit saliva on glasses and leave sweat stains in head bands. From only a few cells in such sources, enough DNA can be extracted to identify the owner.

Law enforcement agencies from throughout Missouri already utilize the state's DNA database as a crime-fighting tool.

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